



INShape 150 Week 1 Rethinking Stretching

New ideas for an important part of your workout

We all know the drill. Before you head out for your morning run or afternoon walk you bend forward to stretch out your hamstrings, and maybe pull your toe up for a calf stretch. You kick your legs out a bit, bounce up and down, and hit the pavement. Unfortunately, new research shows that our long held stretching and warm up beliefs may in fact have the opposite affect.

Our traditional form of stretching (static stretching) does have its benefits but should be done after your body has warmed up and only sparingly prior to a workout. Dynamic stretching, a more active form of stretching, is a better option before you begin your workout as it prepares your muscles for the activity that is to come. Follow these tips to get the most out of your next warm-up:



- **Always warm up first** - NEVER stretch a cold muscle. Engage in some light aerobic activity before you do any stretching. Walk briskly, jog in place, or jump rope for about

five minutes. This will increase blood flow to your muscle fibers, enhance their elasticity, warm up your core, and decrease your risk of injury.

- **Dynamic before your workout** - After your five minute warm-up, engage in dynamic stretching. Dynamic stretching includes slow controlled movements like arm swings, walking lunges, yoga movements, and high knees. Think of a boxer entering the ring or a swimmer on the starting block just before a race. Static stretching differs in that it requires you to remain still, and hold a position for 20-30 seconds. Dynamic stretching uses active muscle movement to bring about the stretch and heat up your body. Do several reps of "goose steps" or knee lifts for about 30 seconds each. Go at your own pace, keep the movements controlled, and do not over exert yourself. [Click here for examples of dynamic stretches.](#)
- **Static after your workout** - Most people stretch prior to their workout but do not cool down properly. Your post-workout muscles are warm and elastic, now is the time to lengthen them and improve their flexibility. Standard static stretches are the best option during your cool down. Hold these stretches for about 30 seconds and never stretch to the point of pain.
- **Stressed? Stretch** - Everyone feels stress from time to time. Stress causes your muscles to contract and tighten, placing your body in a state of tension. This tension tends to surface in the form of chronic back and neck pain. Daily stretching is a great tension and stress reliever. Gentle stretching of tight muscles can help relax not only your body, but an overstressed mind.

Warming up and stretching is an important part of your workout. Whether you are biking, golfing, or enjoying a brisk morning walk, you will greatly benefit from warming up your muscles and increasing their range of motion. Not only will your performance improve, but you will also be less prone to injury, giving you a better chance of achieving your fitness goals. Remember every bit of activity adds up, so keep track of the time you spend walking, playing ball, or working in your yard. Aim for more than the 150 minute minimum to see improvements in your personal health and fitness level.

Eight Foods You Didn't Know You Could (and Should) be Eating!!

1: Greek Yogurt

For years we have been told about the benefits of a Mediterranean diet. Well, what exactly is included in this mystery diet? I can tell you one Mediterranean product you definitely should be eating. It's Greek yogurt, and it's smooth, creamy, and fat free! As a dietitian, if something is fat free, I begin to wonder about what might have been added to improve the products' taste. But, Greek yogurt is simply an all natural, super-strained, and great tasting plain yogurt.

Greek yogurt has an amazing texture and flavor and makes a great breakfast food. With 20 grams of protein per serving it's going to give you the stamina you need throughout the day. It is loaded with calcium and probiotics to help your bones and digestive system. Greek yogurt is also very versatile. It can lead a double life by replacing sour cream in your recipes. While you'll definitely find it at specialty markets, you can also look for it in the dairy section of most larger grocery stores.



For my morning breakfast I enjoy a ½ cup of Greek yogurt mixed with a small handful of walnuts, and a teaspoon or two of agave nectar. This wonderful meal helps me feel more energized throughout the day. What in the world is agave nectar? Tune into next week's article to find out!

A few great ways (and one fabulous recipe!) to use your Greek yogurt:

- Sprinkle in toasted almonds, sesame seeds, natural coconut, and a drizzle of honey for a healthy sweet treat!
- Add a dollop of Greek yogurt to your flavored morning yogurt for a protein boost!
- Stir in fresh blueberries...or any fresh or frozen fruit!
- Instead of sour cream, use Greek yogurt to make dips for crunchy veggies. Again, LOSE the sour cream, and USE the Greek yogurt on your baked potato!

New England Chicken Casserole

By Annessa Chumbley, RD

4 cups cubed or shredded cooked boneless, skinless chicken breast

2 cans low-fat cream of chicken soup

1 cup fat-free Greek yogurt

2 carrots, grated

1 cup corn kernels (fresh or frozen)

½ sweet onion, chopped finely

½ tsp kosher salt

1 cup Fiber One® cereal

½ tsp garlic powder

1/3 cup sliced almonds

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.
2. In a food processor or blender, crush Fiber One cereal (or, you do the ziplock-baggie method and hammer away!) Mix garlic powder into crushed Fiber One® and set aside.

In a medium bowl, combine first seven ingredients until well-mixed. Spray a 9x13 inch pan with non-stick cooking spray. Pour the chicken mixture into pan. Cover with crushed Fiber One®. Sprinkle almonds on top and bake for 30 minutes, or until bubbly and toasty on top!

INShape 150 is about helping you reach or exceed the minimum activity requirements of 150 minutes per week. For more information on INShape 150 and the INShape Exercise Mob please visit www.inshape.in.gov.

